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NOTICES OF NEW WORKS.

**Hygiène; or, The Handbook of Health. In Two Parts: the First Part being addressed to Members of District Boards under Sir Benjamin Hall's "Local Management Act," Magistrates, Clergymen, &c.; the Second Part to the Public in general.* By HARRY WM. LOBB, L.S.A., M.R.C.S.E. London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co.

THE importance of the subject treated of in this work, in its relation to life assurance, is so obvious, that we need offer no apology to our readers for the remarks we propose to make upon the work in question.

The value of sanitary measures as bearing on health and longevity has not unfrequently been advocated in the pages of this *Magazine*, and we welcome with sincere pleasure a contribution on the subject in a form of a useful and compendious Handbook.

It will be seen that the author has divided his work into two parts. It is to the first part particularly, as being so intimately connected with life assurance, that we shall confine our remarks. Mr. Simon, the late Medical Officer to the City of London, in his last report to the Commissioners of Sewers (bearing date the 9th of October, 1855), previous to his accepting the appointment of General Medical Adviser to the Government, shows that, notwithstanding the undoubted sanitary advances that have been made of late years in the City, there is still great room for improvement.

To quote from the Report now before us, "the City of London possesses no public baths, no public laundries, no model dwellings. These institutions, which in their relation to the poor are beyond most things reformatory and educational, and which seem in a peculiar manner to claim support from the wealth and authority of your great municipal government, have hitherto not made a beginning within the City."

From another Report, recently published, we learn that the fearful ravages caused by the cholera during the autumn of 1854, in Broad Street, Westminster, arose from the impurity of the water of a well in that street. A discovery accidentally made by the local investigator led to a minute examination of the well, and to an excavation of the surrounding soil being made; when it appeared that the well was in fact poisoned by the influx of sewage and of surface drainage through the crevices between the bricks, which, it seems, in wells are always laid without mortar or cement, with the view to facilitate the infiltration of the water into the wells from the springs among which they are sunk.

The *Examiner*, in an excellent article on this subject on the 24th November last, goes on to inquire as to what maladies of hitherto unsuspected origin may not be due to these surface wells (for there are many others in a similar condition), which are the receptacles for liquid manure.

Again: we find from an article in the *Builder* of the 24th November last, that Mr. Ward, a Commissioner on the Board of the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers, having found the powers of the Sewers Act inadequate, obtained the passing of an Act called the House Drainage Act—which Act, it appears, after many delays, is only just now in successful operation.

From the above considerations, then, we see how much in its infancy hygienic reform still is.

The first step towards the promotion of sanitary improvement is to

obtain the necessary information as to what is really requisite for the object in view. Information of a kind likely to be useful to us, and in a form in which it could be made available, has been till recently most difficult, if not impossible, to procure. The valuable Reports, however, of the Registrar-General (the 14th and 15th of which, containing the Abstracts for the year 1851, have just been published), give us much of the information that we require. There can be no doubt that the almost perfect system of registration of births, deaths and marriages which now prevails, will ultimately be of the highest service, not only in a sanitary and political, but in a moral and social point of view. This is one of the most valuable practical uses of statistical research.

We obtain *data* from these accumulations of facts: which must, however, be put into shape by the statist before they can be made use of. It should be understood, then, that it is from the valuable *Abstracts* alone that accompany the Reports in question, that we are enabled to draw conclusions from the heterogeneous masses of facts with which the office of the Registrar is inundated; and it is to the important services rendered in disentangling the web of confusion that we owe our power of availing ourselves of information from which, otherwise, we should be unable to derive any beneficial service. Without, therefore, the lucid deductions of Dr. Farr (who may be claimed as belonging to the body of actuaries, and to whom not only that body, but the medical profession and the general public, owe so much), we should be still very much in the dark as to the true deductions to be drawn from the voluminous mass of figures contained in these returns. The concise analyses of this gentleman form the keys which enable us to read the cypher of the Registrar; and while thus, by the help of the statician, the raw material is worked up into a shape to be of real use to the legislature for the purposes of sanitary and moral improvement, means are at the same time afforded of placing the great and deservedly increasing benefits of life assurance on a more sound and satisfactory basis.

The very intimate connection of the subject of hygiene with the objects to which the pages of this *Magazine* are particularly devoted will be our excuse for the length to which our remarks on the subject may extend. The Registration Act, the very keystone of the work of sanitary, political, and moral improvement, when carried out by the statist and the actuary, must in due course act as an aid towards the improvement of health, and consequently of the happiness as well as to the longevity, of the population; and in this aspect tend to reduce the cost of family provision for assurance, and so to bring life assurance more within the means of the masses, and therefore proportionately to lessen the burden of the poor laws, and to diminish the necessity for private eleemosynary assistance.

It would be out of place here to enter more fully into the subjects treated of by the Registrar-General in his Reports; but we may observe, with respect to the registration of marriages and the facts connected with them, that the progress of morality—which is so intimately connected both with education and sanitary progress, and with the general wellbeing of the people, and which undoubtedly has great influence upon the law of marriage—may be tested by these returns. The ages, too, at which marriages are contracted, are greatly influenced by the prosperity or otherwise of the country, and so give an indication of the state of public affairs from which certain inferences may be drawn. In fact, the speculations that the annual returns may give rise to are unlimited.

The readers of this *Magazine* will be aware how much importance we

have always attached to the matters treated of in Mr. Lobb's book, and to which subject many references will be found throughout our pages. To one suggestion we should wish now to refer the reader—viz., that it might be desirable, even in a pecuniary point of view, for Assurance Companies to take their share in such philanthropic undertakings as have for their object the promotion of sanitary measures: by the extension of which, as a correspondent once suggested, disease might be very much prevented, and Assurance Companies might not only obtain a profitable rate of interest for their investments, but might be undoubted gainers in process of time, by the diminution of mortality; it having been shown that there was every likelihood that institutions similar to the "Metropolitan Association for the Improvement of the Dwellings of the Industrious Classes," for instance, would be of a *paying* character.

It has been shown, too, how much the power to check fever and other contagious diseases is in our own hands, and how great already has been the diminution in the mortality from diseases of this class in the districts under the influence of such Associations.

Mr. Lobb, in the work now before us, has successively passed in review the different means at our disposal for promoting the improvement of health: such as improved houses for the poor, ventilation, drainage, water supply, public baths and washhouses, extramural burials, the removal of nuisances, prevention of the adulteration of food, and the appointment of proper officers of health, medical and otherwise, as well as of public inspectors of food.

Appropriate and clever remarks accompany each subject. A most valuable table of Dr. Farr's is included, which shows the annual mortality of 624 registration districts of England and Wales, as well as a statement of the rate of mortality in the principal countries and cities in Europe—the per centage of which, as it may be interesting to some of our readers, we insert in a tabular form.

ANNUAL RATE OF MORTALITY IN EUROPE.		ANNUAL RATE OF MORTALITY IN EUROPEAN CITIES.	
	Per cent.		Per cent.
England	2·3	London	2·5
Denmark	2·3	Berlin	2·5
Holland	2·4	Turin	2·6
France	2·35	Paris	2·8
Sweden	2·4	Genoa	3·1
Prussia	2·8	Lyons	3·3
Sardinia	3·	Hamburg	3·6
Austria	3·1	Moscow	3·8
Russia	3·6	Stockholm	3·9
		St. Petersburg	4·1
		Vienna	4·9

In conclusion, we beg cordially to recommend Mr. Lobb's Handbook to our readers; and though it only falls within our province to notice particularly the first part of the book, we may add that the second contains many valuable hints for the promotion and preservation of health, which are well worthy of attentive perusal.

We may perhaps be allowed to throw out the suggestion for the consideration of Assurance Companies, as to how far it might be to their advantage to aid in the promulgation of a work on a subject so important to their interests as that of hygienic reform.

H. W. P.